

Graduated Driver Licensing Laws

What are graduated driver licensing laws?

Graduated driver's license laws are designed to gradually introduce new drivers to different driving circumstances. Usually, they allow beginners to gain experience driving as they move from a highly supervised permit to a supervised license with restrictions and then to a full-privileged driver's license.

The best graduated driver licensing system includes:

- ▶ A learner's permit stage, beginning at age 16 and lasting at least 6 months.
- ▶ An intermediate license phase (after the applicant passes the driver's test) that:
 - Bans unsupervised night driving during the first 6 to 12 months of licensure; and
 - Bans unsupervised driving with more than one passenger anytime.

A full-license phase for drivers 18 years old, obtainable only after the applicant completes the first two stages without a motor vehicle crash or conviction.

How do graduated driver licensing laws reduce underage drinking and its consequences?

Graduated driver licensing laws help prevent conditions under which young people may be at increased risk of alcohol-related traffic injuries or death. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 28 percent of high school students rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol. Ten percent of high school students reported driving after drinking alcohol.

How can my community take this action?

Take the following steps to initiate or strengthen graduated driver licensing laws:

Assess your State's current law. If your State has few licensing restrictions, mobilize your community to get more graduated driver licensing restrictions passed. Your effort could target a county, but would most likely be at the State level. If the State has a comprehensive graduated driver licensing law, assess the degree to which it is being enforced.

Engage the media. The primary component for implementing graduated driver licensing laws is media awareness and advocacy. Implement public awareness activities in the community, and highlight the relationship between unrestricted youth driving and increased motor vehicle crashes and fatalities. The public should be aware that when more comprehensive graduated licensing laws are in place, both parents and law enforcement can better manage the risks of youth driving.

Raise public awareness. Inform your community about widespread support for graduated licensing. A 2010 national survey of 1,226 parents of teens, 15-18 years old, showed that these parents favor licensing policies as strong as or stronger than those currently existing in States.

Measure and report successful outcomes. Some measures of the effectiveness of graduated drivers licensing laws are:

- ▶ Rates of youth motor vehicle crashes and injuries among those aged 16 and 17;
- ▶ Rates of youth motor vehicle fatalities among those aged 16 and 17;
- ▶ Rates of compliance and/or noncompliance with the graduated driver licensing laws; and
- ▶ Rates of arrests of 16- to 17-year-olds for driving under the influence.

Resources Supporting Action

CDC, *The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit*, from http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf (accessed January 31/2012).

CDC, Teen drivers, *Injury Prevention and Control: Motor Vehicle Safety*, from http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/Teen_Drivers/index.html (accessed January 31, 2012).

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, January 2008 factsheet, *Graduated Driver Licensing System*, from <http://www.nhtsa.gov/DOT/NHTSA/Traffic%20Injury%20Control/Teen%20Driver/files/810888GradDriverLicense.pdf> (accessed January 31, 2012).

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Focus on Prevention*, from <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA10-4120.pdf> (accessed January 31, 2012).